MORICE RIVER ER #81

ORIGINAL PURPOSE To preserve, for research purposes, forest ecosystems representative of the western edge of the Sub-Boreal Spruce Zone.

OVERVIEW

Date established:	15 Dec. 1977	**Location:**	W side of Morice River, 24 km SW of Houston
ORC #:	3081		
Map number:	93 L/2	**Latitude:**	54º14'N
		Longitude:	126º52'W
Total Area:	355 ha	**Elevation:**	640-800 m
Land:	343 ha		
Foreshore:	12 ha		

Access: Access is possible via the Morice River Road, south from Highway 15 near Houston, and a logging bridge across the Morice River.

Biogeoclimatic Zone:	Sub-Boreal Spruce (SBS)
Biogeoclimatic Variant:	SBS dk Dry Cool
Ecosection:	Bulkley Basin
Region:	Skeena
Management Area:	North Tweedsmuir

COMPOSITION

Physical: The reserve is situated in an area of irregular topography near the western edge of the Nechako Plateau. Just beyond, to the northeast, are the Bulkley Ranges. The plateau surface in the reserve is at about the 800 m level. The western half of the reserve, on the plateau surface, is quite flat. To the east, the reserve slopes strongly toward the Morice River, which forms its eastern boundary. The river here has a well entrenched single channel, fairly rapid flow, and very little active floodplain development. Soils are mostly Gray Luvisols and Brunisols.

Biological: Vegetation in the reserve was incompletely described prior to a forest fire which burned almost its entire area in May 1983. However, trees known to be present include Engelmann and white spruce hybrids, black spruce, subalpine fir, lodgepole pine, paper birch, trembling aspen, and black cottonwood. Aerial photos indicate that most of the flatter uplands supported dense stands of lodgepole pine or spruce, more open woods containing aspen occurred on southeast-facing slopes near the river, and a few cottonwoods were present along the riverbank.

Slopes near the river provide important range for Moose, Mule Deer and American Black Bear.

MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

SIGNIFICANT SPECIES	BC LIST STATUS	COSEWIC STATUS	CF PRIORITY
Back's sedge	Blue listed		2

THREATS

Climate Change:	Forest research projects a dramatic contraction of the Sub-Boreal Spruce Zone's climatic envelope. Displacement by drought and heat tolerant forests may be a possible outcome of climate change. Novel ecosystems will most likely develop.
Forestry:	Adjacent forest development and silviculture may impact forests in reserve.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Forest regeneration following fire is being studied here by the Research Branch, British Columbia Ministry of Forests.

Research Plots – Research Branch, Smithers established 10 plots in the reserve to follow succession after the fire. There is a complete plant species list associated with this.

Thomson, S., Pojar, J., and A. Banner 1991. Initial Secondary Succession Following Wildfire in the Sub-boreal Spruce Zone, North Central British Columbia: the First Seven Years. Forest Sciences Section, B.C. Min. Forests, Smithers, B.C.

Some of the plots have been re-visisted and re-measured since 1991 by the Forest Sciences staff in Smithers, but a report has not been produced.

Bird and Mammal lists are available – Rosamund Pojar (warden)

SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF SPECIES MENTIONED IN THE MORICE RIVER ER ACCOUNT

Flora

aspen, trembling (*Populus tremuloides)*
Back's sedge *(Carex backii)*
birch, paper (*Betula papyrifera)*
cottonwood, black (*Populus trichocarpa* ssp. *trichocarpa)*
fir, subalpine (*Abies lasiocarpa* var. *lasiocarpa)*
pine, lodgepole (*Pinus contorta* var. *latifolia)*
spruce, black (*Picea mariana)*
spruce, hybrid white (*Picea glauca* x *engelmannii)*

Fauna

Bear, American Black (*Ursus americanus)*
Moose (*Alces americanus)*
Deer, Mule (*Odocoileus hemionus)*